



Bitterroot National Forest

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOTE TO MEDIA: I will not issue fire updates over the weekend unless there is a change in activity level. If you have a question and need to reach me, please call me on my cell phone 531-1130.

Also – I have received a few phone calls from the public indicating that one of the TV stations reported that Stage II restrictions had been lifted. Please note our reminder that this is not the case in western Montana.

Thanks for your help getting the news out! Nan

“Fire Activity Update for Hunter and other Recreationists”

Hamilton, Montana, September 8, 2006 — While wildfire activity is quieting down a bit, conditions in the forests still require vigilance and care. And for those heading out into the forests for bow hunting or other recreational pursuits, there are a few important reminders to consider:

1) Be careful of snags. In both old burns, and in freshly burned areas, snags can quietly fall even if there is no discernable wind.

2) Magruder Road is closed to traffic at Poet Creek (on the east) due to fire activity on the Nez Perce National Forest.

3) Stage II Fire Restrictions are still in effect, and include prohibitions against:

- Building or using a campfire.
- Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials.
- Operating motorized vehicles off designated roads or trails.
- And between 1:00 pm and 1:00 am, each day,
 - Operating a chain saw or other equipment powered by an internal combustion engine for felling, bucking, skidding, road building, and wood cutting during industrial operations or firewood gathering
 - Blasting, welding or activities that generate flame or flammable material

A patrol is required for 1 hour following cessation of all work as described above.

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Now on to Fire News...

The Gash Creek Fire continues to burn interior pockets of unburned material, and is ever so slowly creeping down the north-facing slope in Big Creek. Acreage is currently estimated at 8410 acres, with ten people staffing the fire. Firefighters' efforts are focused on mop up and patrol work.

Following Thursday's flight of the many wildland fire use fires currently burning in the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Areas, we have two new fires to report, and updates on several of the fires that have been burning in the backcountry for over a month.

Of the two new fires, Vance Mountain is 30 acres in size and burning along a high elevation ridge. Reynolds Reburn is the result of a lightning strike within the perimeter of the 2005 Reynolds Fire area. It is currently burning in a snag. Both of these fires will be assessed to determine suitability for wildland fire use.

Most of the existing Wildland Fire Use (WFU) fires continue to creep or smolder although a few became more active early this week as temperatures warmed, relative humidities dropped, and an occasional storm cell passed over generating localized winds. Since temperatures have cooled, activity has slowed. Here's the rundown on what's out there:

- East Langdon WFU Fire. This fire has burned approximately 2000 acres in an area 5 miles west of Hell's Half Acre Lookout. It experienced significant growth in the past few days, influenced by downdrafts from a storm cell that passed directly overhead.
- Bare Peak WFU Fire. This fire grew to 2150 acres in the past few days, burning at the head end of the Soda Springs and Little West Fork drainages.
- Lake of the Rocks Wildland WFU Fire. 838 acres, burning in high elevation stands in upper Boulder Creek. The West Fork Ranger District will utilize a helicopter and water buckets to retard the spread of this fire down Boulder Creek
- Mount Aura WFU Fire is now at 875 acres, and is located 5 miles west of Paradise. Most of the growth has been along its ragged perimeter. It has demonstrated some isolated torching but for the most part is moving along as an underburn.
- Thirteen Creek WFU Fire. This fire grew significantly this week, from 15 to 350 acres. It is located 16 miles south of Magruder Crossing and is burning in between some old burns. It has reached the Selway River and the Selway River Trail but the trail is not closed to public use at this time.

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- Razor Blue WFU Fire. At 80 acres, 6 miles southeast of Nez Perce Pass, this fire is creeping around in ground fuels, slowly backing downhill ~ and away from the Wilderness Boundary.
- Indian Ridge WFU Fire. Remains at 10 acres and is creeping around in ground fuels.
- Cooper Ridge WFU Fire. At 0.10 acres, this fire continues to produce smoke from a downed log.
- North Harrington WFU Fire. Has burned 1 acre about 5 miles southwest of the Salmon Mountain Lookout. It continues to smoke but has shown no growth in past few days.
- Pete Ridge WFU Fire. This fire has burned 4 acres southeast of Nez Perce Mountain. Fire activity is minimal but it continues to produce some smoke.
- Fires currently listed as inactive, but not yet declared out include:
 - o Stripe Creek – 0.10 acre, 16 miles south of Magruder Crossing
 - o Gold Pan Ridge – 2 acres, near the lake of the same name in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.
 - o Big Creek Lake – 3 acres above Big Creek Lake, has been inactive for two weeks.
 - o Fire Mountain – Inactive at 0.25 acres, southwest of Paradise.
 - o Thompson Flat – Inactive at 0.10 acre, and located 1 ½ miles southeast of Thompson Flat.
 - o West Langdon – Inactive at 0.25 acres, located 6 miles west of Hells Half Acre Lookout.

Fire weather projections call for cooler and breezy conditions over the weekend.

The Ravalli County Air Quality Hotline at 406-375-6679 provides recommendations for residents who are impacted by the smoke in the valley.

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